

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6775

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

SECDEF WASHDC//ISA//

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 5634

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU, UR

SUBJ: PRESS REPORTS KUWAIT-SOVIET ARMS DEAL TO BE SIGNED

REF: (A) KUWAIT 3877, (B) KUWAIT #

1. KUWAIT PRESS (AL ANBA, DECEMBER 5) REPORTS THAT KUWAITI DEFMIN IS MEETING WITH HIS STAFF SOON TO "PUT FINAL TOUCHES ON THE ARMS AGREEMENT THAT KUWAIT INTENDS TO SIGN WITH THE SOVIET UNION." PRESS REPORT NOTES THAT GOK HAS MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT YET ABOUT THE TYPES OR VALUES OF ARMS INVOLVED, BUT REPORT SAYS THAT IT IS UNDERSTOOD TO COVER "SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES, SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILES, ANTI-ARMORED VEHICLE MISSILES AND FIELD (ARABIC: MEEDAAN) GUNS" TO THE VALUE OF ABOUT \$400 MILLION. THE REPORT CONTINUES TO THE EFFECT THAT THIS ARMS AGREEMENT IS THE OUTCOME OF SEVERAL YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT DURING THE FINAL STAGES THE GOK "CONVINCED" THE USSR THAT "THERE ARE ARABS CAPABLE OF TRAINING KUWAITIS" ON CERTAIN SOVIET WEAPONS. THERE ARE WEAPONS WHICH EGYPT OR SYRIA ALREADY POSSESS, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORT, AND THEREFORE THE "TECHNICAL OBSTACLES" REGARDING THE IMPORTATION OF "RUSSIAN EXPERTS" TO KUWAIT " WERE OVERCOME", AND SOVIET
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WEAPONS SYSTEMS FOUND IN NEITHER EGYPTIAN NOR SYRIAN INVENTORY

WERE "EXCLUDED FROM THE LIST" OF WEAPONS WHICH KUWAIT WILL BUY FROM THE USSR. (THE IMPLICATION HERE IS THAT KUWAIT HAS PURCHASED ONLY SUCH SOVIET WEAPONS AS IT MILITARY CAN RECEIVE TRAINING ON FROM ARAB NEIGHBORS, AND THAT NO SOVIETS WILL COME TO KUWAIT TO PROVIDE TRAINING.)

2. COMMENT: THIS PRESS REPORT- IT IS NO MORE THAN THAT- ACCORDS GENERALLY WITH ONE LINE OF REPORTING WE HAVE RECEIVED DURING PAST FIVE MONTHS REGARDING A PENDING KUWAITI-SOVIET ARMS DEAL. THE ASSERTED VALUE OF THE PACKAGE IS SOMEWHAT HIGHER THAN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED--\$400 AS OPPOSED TO \$300 MILLION--AND THE MIX OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS IS A BIT DIFFERENT THAN WE HAVE HEARD BEFORE. THE REPORT ON "OBSTACLES" OVERCOME WITH REGARD TO SOVIET PRESENCE IN KUWAIT, ACCORDS WITH OUR EARLIER ASSUMPTIONS (REF A) THAT SOVIET PRESENCE WAS THE KEY STICKING POINT PREVENTING CONSUMMATION OF THE DEAL, THAT THE KUWAITIS WOULD NOT PERMIT LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET MILITARY EXPERTS TO LIVE IN KUWAIT, AND THAT KUWAIT WOULD PREFER TO HAVE EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN ADVISORS.
SUTHERLAND

NOTE BY OC/T: REFTEL OMISSION AS RECEIVED

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